

Heart Failure

What is heart failure?

Heart failure (HF) means the heart is not pumping blood as well as it should. It may pump at a different speed, pump blood out with less force, or pump out less blood with each beat. Blood backs up in the blood vessels. The extra fluid in the blood vessels seeps into the lungs or other parts of the body. When fluid seeps into the lungs, it makes it hard to breathe. This is called congestion and it's why heart failure is sometimes called congestive heart failure. Fluid seeping into other parts of the body causes swelling. When there is too much fluid in the body, it puts even more strain on the heart. Heart failure is one of the most common causes of heart-related illness and death in the U.S.

What can I expect in the hospital?

You may need to stay in the hospital because:

- You are having a lot of trouble breathing
- Your oxygen level is very low
- You have other medical conditions which are making your heart failure symptoms worse
- You need intravenous medicines which will make your heart failure symptoms better

Several things may be done while you are in the hospital to monitor, test, and treat your condition. They include:

Monitoring:

- You will be checked often by the hospital staff.
- A heart (cardiac) monitor will be used to check your heartbeat.
- Your blood oxygen level will be monitored by a sensor that is attached to your finger or earlobe.
- Your fluid intake may be monitored closely by keeping track of everything you eat and drink and any IV fluids you receive.
- You may have a small tube (catheter) placed into your bladder through the urethra (the opening from the bladder to the outside of the body) to drain and measure urine from the bladder.

Testing:

Testing may include:

- Blood tests to check for a hormone (brain natriuretic peptide or BNP) to check how well the heart is working
- Blood, urine, or other tests to monitor how well your organs are functioning
- Chest X-ray: Pictures of the inside of your chest to check if your heart is bigger than normal and to check for extra fluid in your lungs

- **Electrocardiogram (ECG):** A test which measures and records the electrical activity of your heart
- **Ultrasound (echocardiogram):** Sound waves and their echoes passed through your body from a small device (called a transducer) that is held against your skin to create pictures of the inside of your heart to look at your heart valves, blood flow, and how well your heart muscle is pumping
- **Heart catheterization (coronary angiogram):** A series of X-rays taken after your healthcare provider places a long, thin, flexible tube (catheter) into a blood vessel in your groin and up to your heart and injects a special dye into your blood vessels to check the flow of blood to the heart muscle and pumping function of the heart
- **Stress test:** A test that measures how your heart responds during exercise. If you are unable to exercise, you will be given a medicine that increases the work of your heart in order to measure your heart's response. This test will help your provider decide what treatments and exercise are best for you or may be needed in the future.

Treatment:

The treatment for heart failure depends on your symptoms, how well you respond to treatment, your overall health, and any complications you may have.

- The goals of treatment are to:
 - Decrease how hard your heart is working
 - Get rid of extra water in your body
 - Improve how well your heart pumps blood
 - Treat any problems that make your condition worse
- You will have a small tube (IV catheter) inserted into a vein in your hand or arm. This will allow for medicine to be given directly into your blood and to give you fluids, if needed.
- You will receive oxygen through a small tube placed under your nose or through a mask placed over your face.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Relax and widen blood vessels and allow blood to flow through them easier
 - Reduce fluid build-up and swelling in the body
 - Help your heart muscle beat stronger and regularly
 - Help reduce blood pressure, slow the heart rate, and reduce the workload of the heart
 - Help prevent blood clots
 - Replace minerals your body loses when taking certain medicines used to treat your condition

What can I do to help?

- You will need to tell your healthcare team if you have new or worsening:

- Chest discomfort (pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain) that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back or chest discomfort that goes to your arms, neck, jaw or back
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Trouble breathing
- Trouble speaking or understanding
- Trouble talking or walking because of shortness of breath
- Very fast heart rate
- Swelling in your feet, ankles, or legs, or abdominal bloating, or swollen hands or face
- Waking up at night with trouble breathing or having a hard time lying flat in bed because of shortness of breath
- Tiredness
- Frequent dry, hacking cough
- Coughing up mucus that is thick or blood-stained
- Ask questions about any medicine or treatment or information that you do not understand.

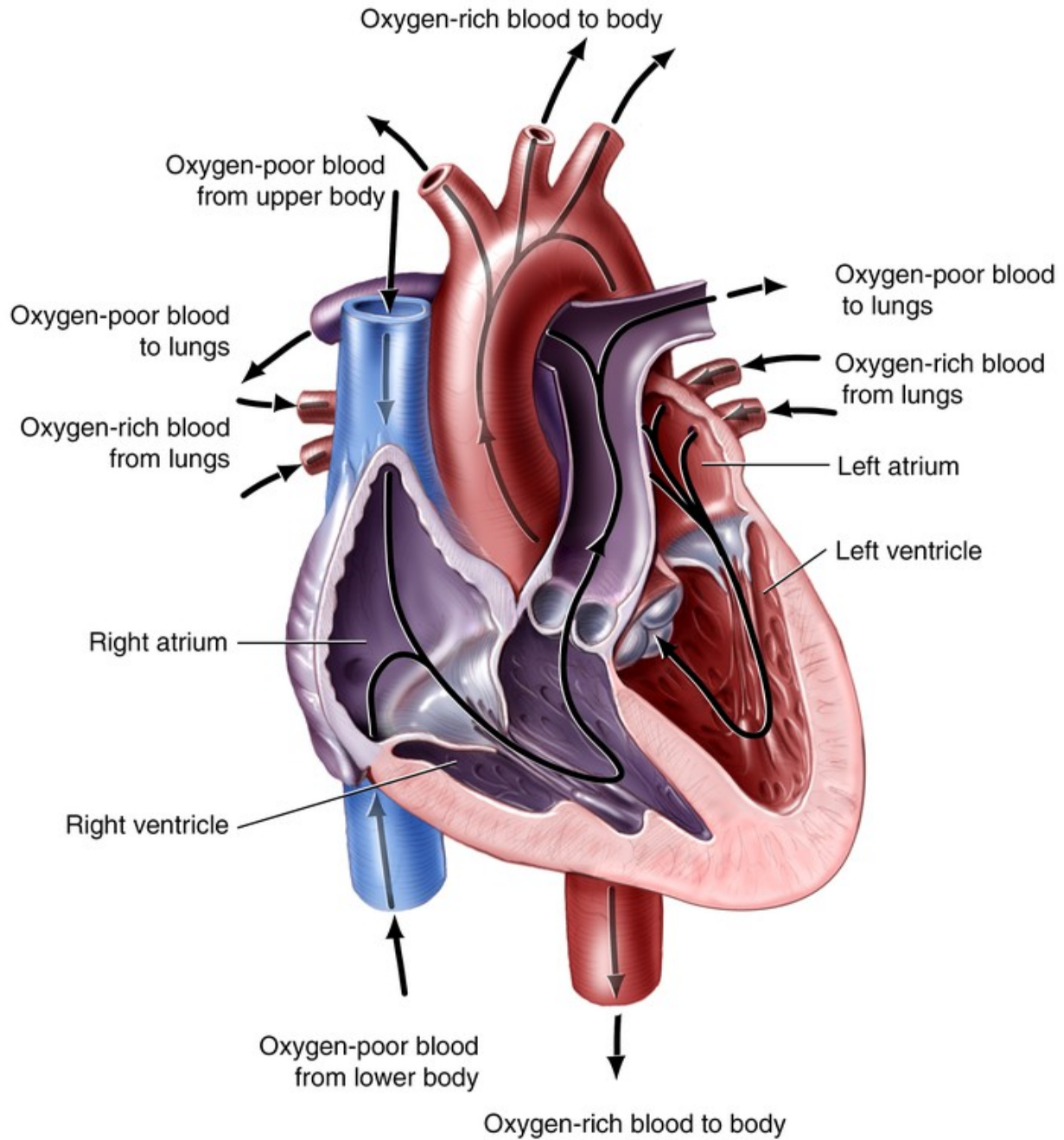
How long will I be in the hospital?

How long you stay in the hospital depends on many factors. The average amount of time to stay in the hospital with heart failure is 4 to 6 days. Your provider will make sure that you are breathing easily, your oxygen levels and other medical conditions are stable, and that you will be able to care for yourself when you go home.

Developed by RelayHealth.

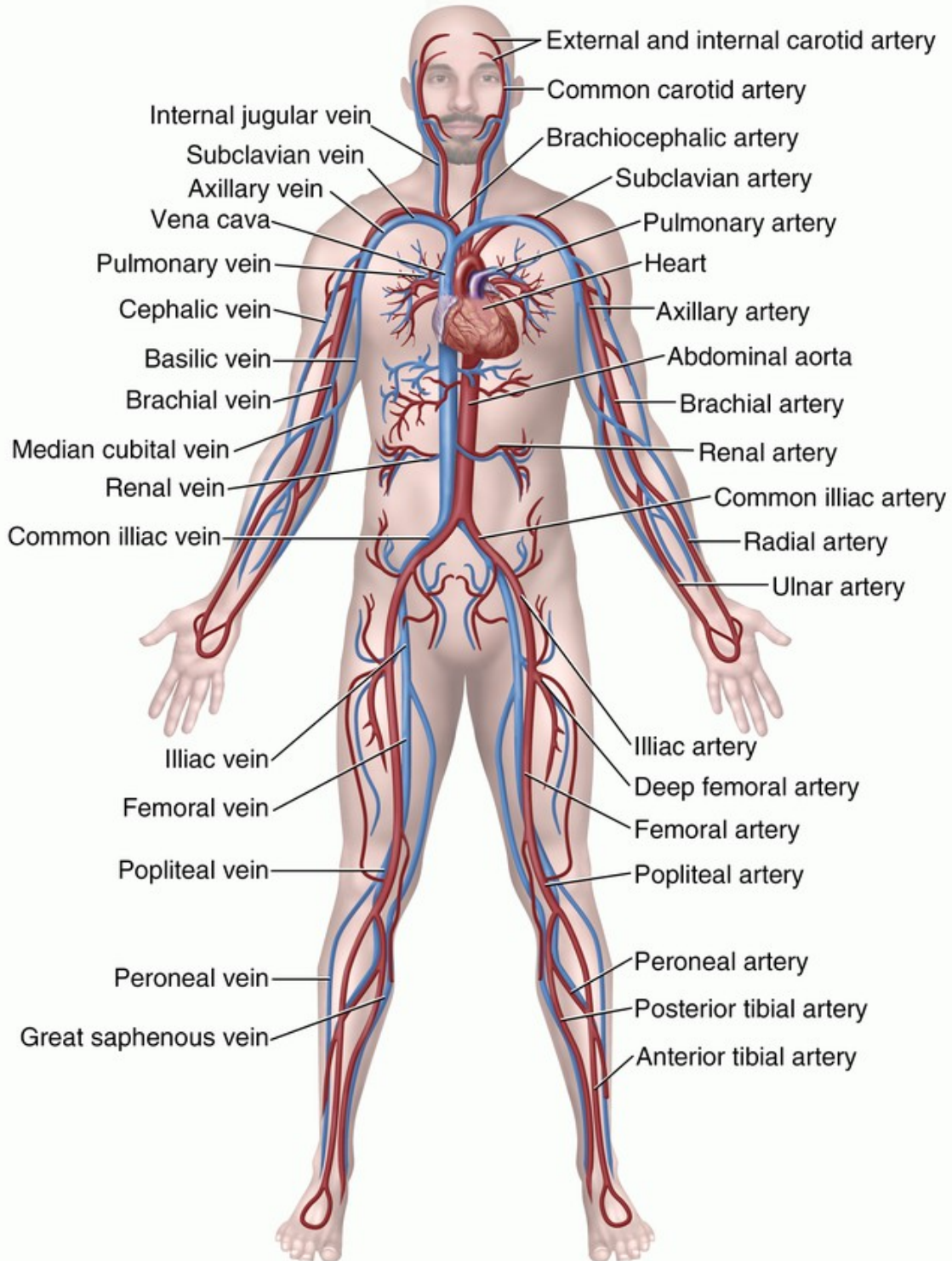
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Blood Flow in Heart



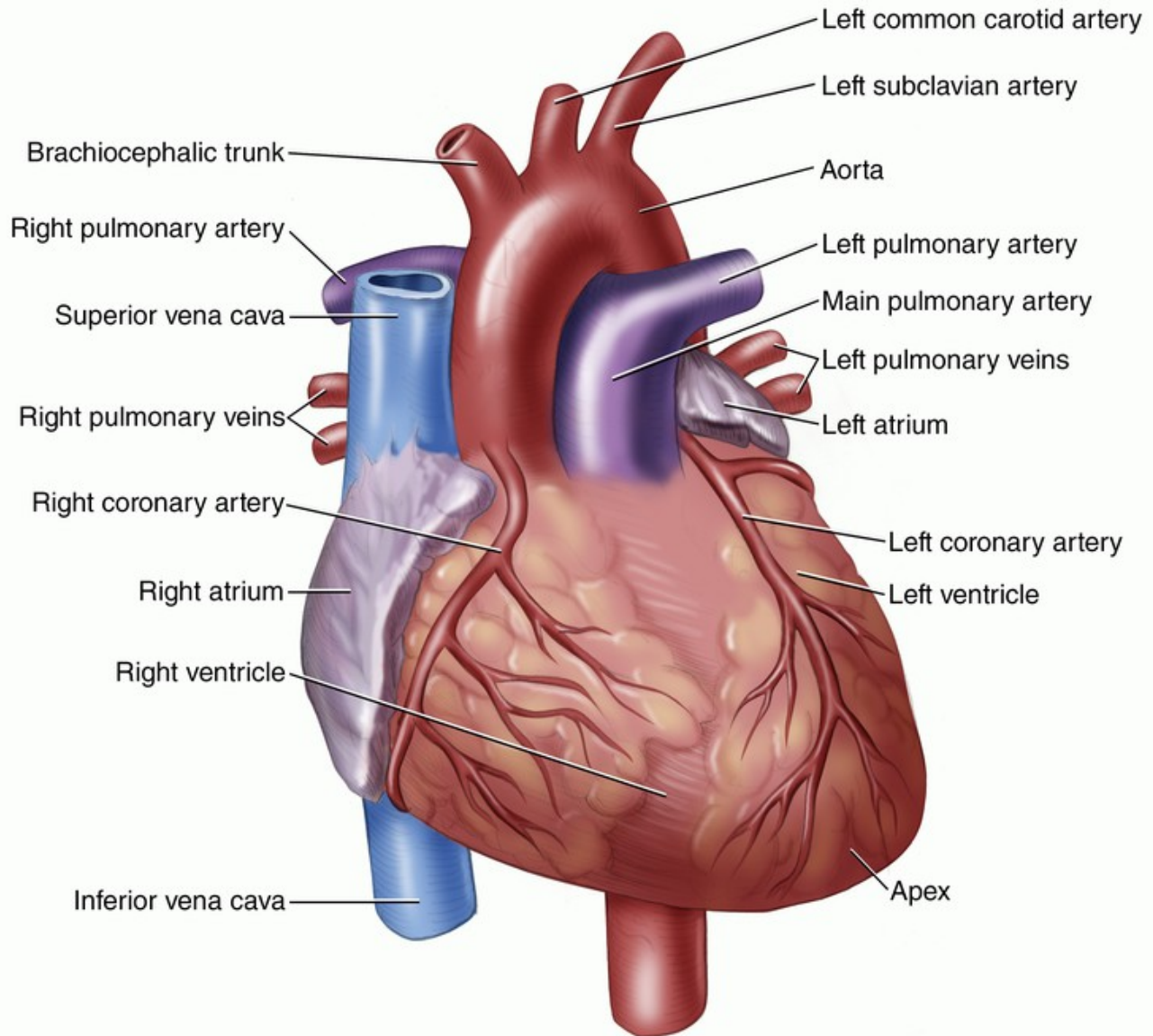
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Circulatory System



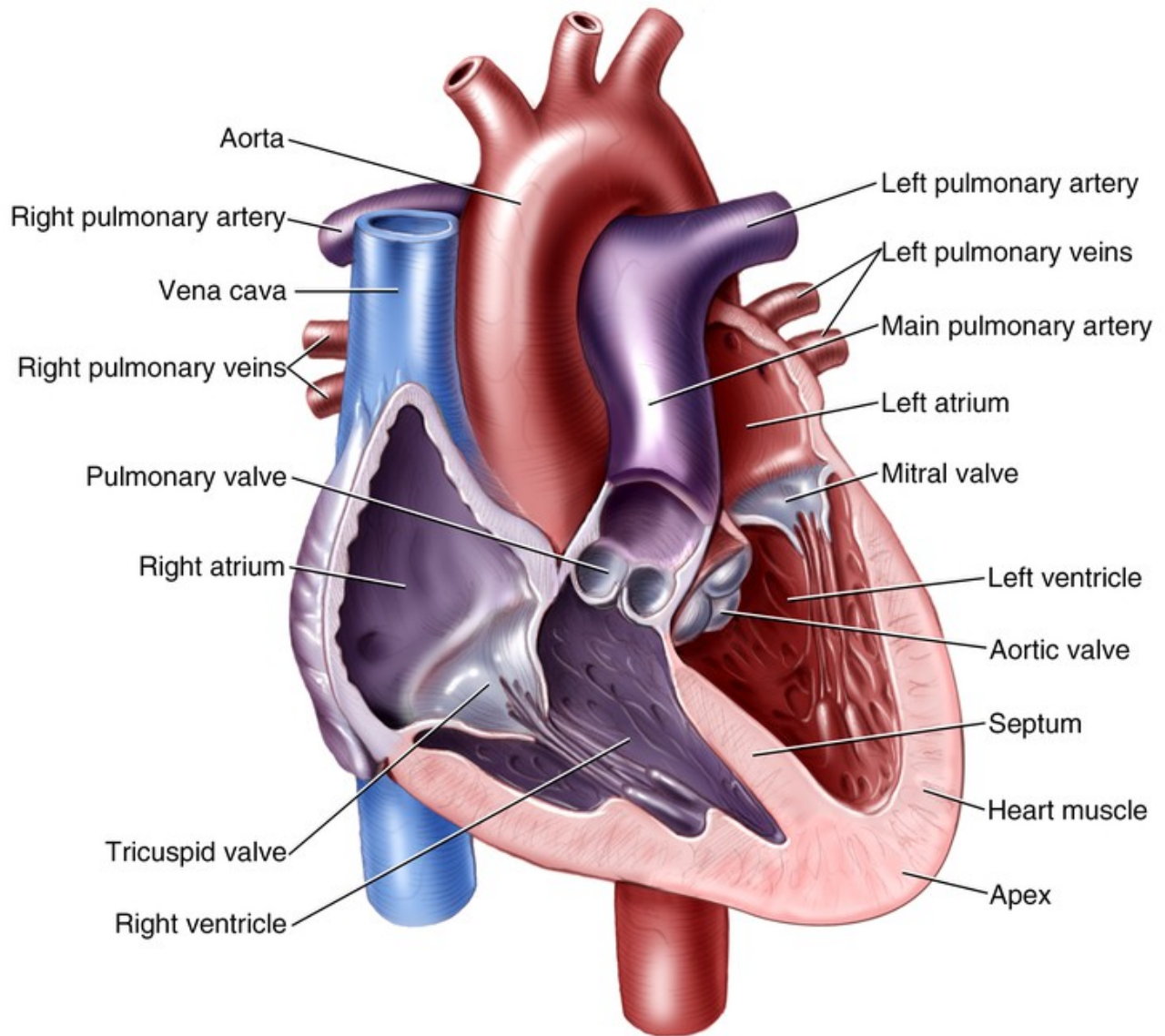
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Heart: External View



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